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SOME OF OUR WALKS.

BY M. L. HODGSON.

(H. of E.)

"Along the river's stony marge
The sandlark chants a joyous song,
The thrush is busy in the wood
And carols loud and long.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks
All newly born; both earth and sky keep jubilee."

FROM the early spring when its banks are gay with the beautiful golden flowers of *Trollius europæus* until the last flowers of the Ragwort make a brave stand against the winter cold, the banks of the Brathay offer a succession of such exquisite flowers for our admiration and study, that it is not surprising that this should be one of our favourite walks. But it is not only the beauty of the flowers themselves; where else can we find such lovely surroundings? The noisy little river rushing over rocks and stones, under bridges, racing round islands, widening out into broad shallow reaches, until the personality of it touches us like a thing with life. Then the mountains with all their marvellous changes of light and shade, colour and clouds, standing so still with the noisy river rushing below, while over all we see such a sky sometimes, that we say, "How glorious it is, nowhere could it be surpassed!"

The flowers themselves seem to love the Brathay, and grow their very best; here we find in the wet patches left by the river when it retreats into its narrowest channel, Bogbean and Marsh Cinquefoil in abundance, whilst side by side grow masses of *Thalictrum* and *Enanthe crocata*. The latter plant is very poisonous, and should never be allowed to grow where cattle feed. All the common plants, such as Eyebright, Pepperwort, yellow and red Rattles, Ragged Robin, etc., are plentiful, whilst among the more rare flowers we get the Great Burnet and Red Centaury, the last being very uncommon here. Perhaps the most

beautiful sight on the banks of the river is when the tall spears of the purple Loosestrife stand boldly up amongst the lovely masses of the Marsh Ragwort; the effect of the red purple pinnacles piercing the flat heads of golden yellow is delightful, all being harmonised by the background of humbler and less conspicuous plants, of which there are hundreds.

Standing on the wooden bridge by the church one looks down on a perfect mass of plant life, as soon as the water retreats sufficiently for them to grow; it is a curious and most interesting fact that for months at a time the plants and seeds exist under water. Violets, Flax, Daisies, Clover, and many other flowers which we are accustomed to associate with dry banks, flourish amazingly actually in the bed of the stream. Here and there we find low bushes of the Bog Myrtle, and holding their spikes of lilac flowers well above the water on their pinky yellow stems, with their rosettes of fleshy green leaves completely submerged, we see the quaint Water Lobelia. The famous Globe flowers grow in profusion in every stream, and in spring cover the little islands and nod gaily to their reflection in the water below, tempting off boots and stockings and giving an excuse for a welcome wade and wet feet to many a flower gatherer. Along by the river the walls are covered with many interesting plants and ferns, and the banks with Bilberry and mosses of all kinds. From winter to winter again the trees give us no end of pleasure and profit; buds, flowers, leaves, catkins, and fruit, each in turn come before us, and are studied with ever increasing pleasure. Surely no trees anywhere have given more delight than those on the banks of the Brathay?

The woods on the slopes of Wansfell rival the Brathay as one of our favourite walks; here and there, from the more open spaces and prominent crags and rocks, we get such views of mountains, lakes, and sky that our hard climb up is well repaid, and it is not easy work to search, climb, and look, at one and the same time, but how lovely it all is, winter and summer, spring and autumn! There is always something to see and something to delight heart and mind. Whether we search for the Columbines hidden in the shade, hunt for Orchises, or go to see if Herb Paris has

condescended to come out, or whether the Beech and Oak ferns have unrolled themselves, we find no end of work ready for us in the woods at all times and seasons. The sweet-scented yellow Agrimony grows luxuriantly along the narrow paths blue with Sheep Scabious; Honeysuckle climbs from tree to tree, and the Guelder Rose flourishes in its banners of flowers everywhere, often hitting us hard in the face as we push our way through the thick underwood. The weird-looking Toothwort grows in several places, and all down the little noisy brook we find the lovely Water Aven and masses of *Luzula sylvatica*. In the early spring the wood is purple with Violets and gay with Primroses and Anemones, while the long yellow sprays of the Broom bushes hang their golden splendour over the footpaths. Surely it is a joy on such days as these, when "earth and sky keep jubilee," merely to look and feel that one is alive and can, if one will, appreciate it all. One of the most interesting flowers we get here is *Ranunculus auricomus*, with its odd one-sided flowers; to hunt for and find a perfect one is often quite an undertaking.

In the boggy patches we find the lovely wax-like lilac flowers, with their purple streaks, of *Viola palustris*, and later on their large reniform leaves; but nowhere do we find Sweet Violets nor yet Cowslips nearer than the Ferry. Where the underwood is cleared we find patches of Enchanter's Night Shade, *Circea lutetiana*, with such red stems and rosy little flowers that the famous enchantress herself might be delighted that anything so pretty should be associated with her name. In this wood we find Primroses nearly all the year round, and nowhere do we get Anemones so early. Quite down through the middle of the wood there is a streak of limestone and graptolitic mudstone, and where this crops out, both here and by the lake, we find a few good plants; it is only on this soil we ever get the common Bladder Campion, and as well, the best plants of Hemp Agrimony and the rare Northern Bedstraw. In the autumn the woods are gay with the fruits of the Guelder Rose, and Spindle Tree; Roses, with the exception of *R. mollis* and *R. canina*, are not very common, so that the fruits do not form a very conspicuous feature in our autumn nosegays, but we have so many things to make up for this

that we can afford to miss them. The Oaks in the wood are a constant source of interest, being frequently covered with numerous galls of all kinds, and these are often so beautiful, from the early oak apple to the cherry galls on the dark brown autumn leaves, that it is impossible to overlook them.

The interesting but aggravating group of composites, the Hieraciaceae, is represented by some three or four forms, which are fairly common, while all the wet places are gay with the heads of yellow flowers of *Crepis paludosa*. The St. John's Worts are common everywhere. In the wood we find *H. perforatum*, *H. humifusum*, *H. androsæmum*, *H. quadrangulum*, *H. pulchrum*, and *H. elodes*, and also we get two or three species of willow herb.

When we exert ourselves to climb up the heights of Loughrigg we are well repaid for our toil. Everywhere we go we find something of interest, from the slender spikes of Marsh Arrow Grass to the Orchises, a world of interesting plants lying just beneath our feet. Ferns, mosses, sedges, rushes and grasses each in turn claim our attention, while flowers innumerable grow far and wide; the bogs are full of lovely *Primula farinosa* and sweet-scented mountain ferns; here patches of lovely bog Pimpernel and there Yellow Mountain Saxifrage in profusion. The little *Malaxis* grows sparingly by the streams, while the tarns are full of white Water Lilies and Bogbean in turn. Low down in the moss we come across an inconspicuous little plant, which nevertheless holds an important step in the ladder of plant life, being an important link in the chain of vegetable biology, *Selaginella selaginoides*.

The Heath family is represented by three species which are all fairly common, while we have specimens of all the common mountain flowers—some few uncommon ones may also be discovered by diligent search, such as the tiny Teesdalia and Bog Orchis. The Spotted Hand Orchis is abundant, and here and there we get tiny specimens of Butterfly and Fragrant Orchises. The interesting insectivorous plants Sundew and Butterwort are very common. I am sorry to say no one has yet found the flowers of the former with the petals thrown back. It would be interesting to know at what time of day we could see this; I have been told "at noon on a hot bright day," but have never caught

it in the act. Some few plants of Cranberry are to be found amongst the great Juniper bushes towards Grasmere, and we also get lovely specimens of Bog Asphodel and the Grass of Parnassus.

The three club mosses common in the district are all to be found on one of the points on the top of the mountain, and we also find viviparous forms of several rushes and grasses. It is quite impossible for me to enter into the many strange forms and devices by which nature attains her aims and objects in plant life, many of these are familiar to the least observant person amongst us, but those with "eye-mindedness" will agree, I am sure, when I say there is no plant which in some way or other does not witness to the ingenious adaptiveness of plants and their ways. One laughs delightedly at the cunning contrivances; a picture of flying and hopping seeds was once a revelation to me, and since then I have seen no end of lovely ways amongst capsules and pods; to write about them needs volumes, not a few pages only.

Besides the rivers, woods and mountains, we have other less important, though not less interesting walks, in each of which we have our nook or corner of special interest. Filmy ferns to be found in one, with a rare *Pyrola* growing not very far off, and the rare *Noli-tangere*, and patches of Barrenwort close by. The Nook, another of our best loved haunts, with great plants of purple Geranium and the earliest Coltsfoot, which is always eagerly looked for. Then there are the shores of the lake itself, where we find curious spiders' nests, the Quillwort, Bistort, great yellow Loosestrife, and the clumps of Buckthorn covered with flowers and fruit; these are always a keen delight, and when in spring the shores are gay with Globe flowers and sweet with the fragrant Bog Myrtle, who is more happy than those with time and opportunity to ramble there? In their season we can gather as well our lovely yellow Daffodils, which grow by hundreds on the low sandy shores. To those of us who have been called by duty to far off scenes and places, the thought of the lovely surroundings in which they passed their student days must often come as a sweet fresh breeze from the mountains they know so well; reminding them, not only of the place, but also of the aims and high hopes with

which they prepared for their beautiful and important work amongst the little ones.

I cannot end my short paper without a few words on the all-important subject of Nature Teaching. Those of you who have taken it up in earnest know how it opens the eyes and understandings as soon as children begin *to see*. Outdoor work comes as a joy to all concerned when there are new facts to put down in the note-books, fresh flowers to be added to the list, and some creature or plant that has almost demanded that its portrait should be painted. Professor Thomson's delightful papers in the July and August numbers should be carefully read, and the benefit of nature study will be forcibly brought before you in such a way as cannot fail to remind you of many things that some of you perhaps may have forgotten.

The importance which underlies such apparently trivial things as noting the first appearance of flowers, the opening buds of trees, or the arrival of birds, and first appearance of insects, is so great that one almost fears to touch on it, and yet it adds such delight to life and helps so much to educate both heart and mind that one rejoices beyond measure when an enthusiastic master gives us even a few words to help us on.